GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Water Conservation During Drought and Beyond

One-third of New Hampshire is classified as "abnormally dry" by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the time of this writing, with drought declarations possible before the end of summer. Water use increases sharply during these types of conditions largely the result of discretionary water use such as lawn irrigation. In fact, it is not unusual for demand to our water systems to more than double during the summer.

At least 65 New Hampshire water systems are known to have implemented some type of outdoor water use restriction. Thus far, the restrictions have not been the result of water shortages in the environment. Rather, they have been needed to address sharp increases in discretionary consumption that water systems are not engineered to accommodate. However, additional restrictions and implementation of water conservation measures become imperative as drought declarations and supply shortages begin to occur.

Water conservation, although effective at addressing short term challenges, is not simply a drought mitigation tool. Incorporating conservation measures into long-term planning may assist with maintaining adequate supplies in the face of population growth, aging infrastructure, and climate change. The following are behavioral changes to consider, which can be instituted immediately to assist with drought, as well as engineering changes that can be implemented over extended periods to ensure efficient use of the resource.

Water Use	Short Term	Long Term
Landscape Irrigation	Come to terms with landscape irrigation. Is it a priority to spray potable water on the ground to maintain a green lawn? A brown lawn is not a dying lawn, but grass that has gone dormant to survive the dry conditions. If a green lawn is a must, irrigate as efficiently as possible by basing watering needs on soil moisture at the root zone as opposed to automatic timers.	A properly designed landscape in New Hampshire will require little to no irrigation to supplement precipitation. Reduce the size of lawns, ensure adequate topsoil, choose drought tolerant grass mixes and locally appropriate plantings to have an attractive, self-sustaining landscape. If irrigation is planned, hire an irrigation professional certified by WaterSense to design, install, and audit the irrigation system.
Fixture Water Use	Install inexpensive thread on faucet aerators to reduce faucet flows. Utilize displacement devices in toilet tanks. Limit time in the shower to	Replace older fixtures with new models that carry the WaterSense label. WaterSense fixtures use 20% less water with no sacrifice in performance. For

	less than five minutes. Turn off the faucet when it's not being used, such as while brushing teeth and shaving.	example, switching to a WaterSense toilet will save the average home 11,000 gallons a year and $64 in utility bills.
Appliance Water Use	Run clothes washing machines and dish washers only when they are full.	New horizontal axis washing machines use 20 gallons per load compared to an average of 43 for conventional washing machines. New dishwashers use less than 7 gallons per load compared to 14 for their older counterparts.
Get Creative	Fill a bowl to wash vegetables as opposed to washing them under the tap, and use the wash water for other purposes like watering indoor plants.	Install rain barrels to capture roof runoff from downspouts and use the water for vegetable gardens. Two rain barrels installed in tandem can hold 100 gallons of water. A small rain event of a quarter of an inch is about 75 gallons on the average roof top – enough water to sustain your backyard vegetable garden through a dry-spell

Although dry-spells and drought provide a good opportunity to reflect on our water use and identify opportunities for efficiency, it's important to incorporate water conservation into our every-day lives. Whether on a private well or public supply; implementing the measures above will save you water and money, help the environment, and assist with maintaining adequate supplies for future growth and economic development.

DES has a series of guidance documents that assist homeowners with reducing water use both inside and outside of the home. Please visit: http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/index.htm#efficiency for a complete list of water efficiency fact sheets. Please visit WaterSense at www.epa.gov/watersense/ to learn more about water efficient fixtures or local irrigation professionals certified through the program.